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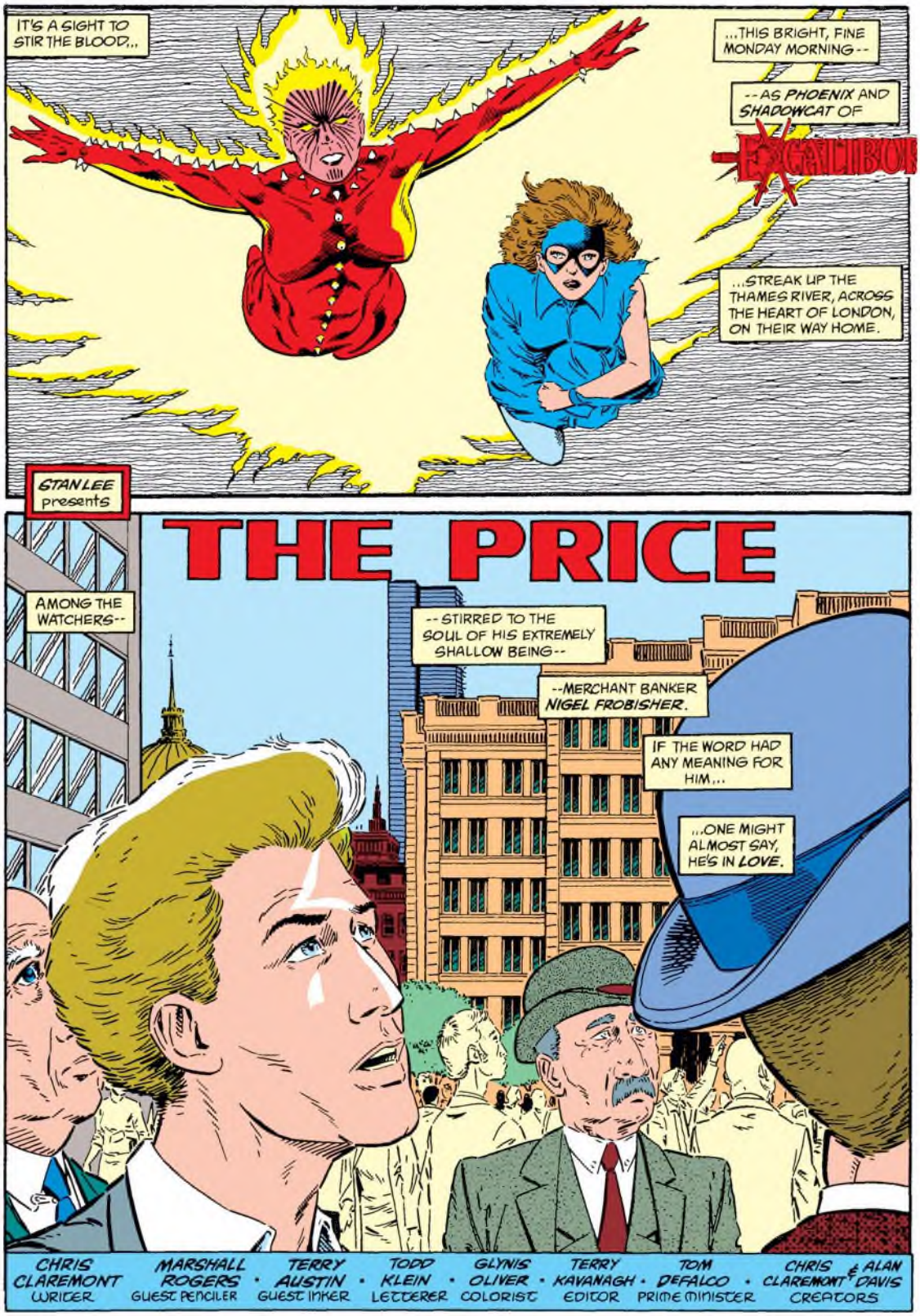
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE
AUTHORITY
EXCALIBUR
BLAME IT ON PHOENIX!
ROGERS/austin


IT'S A SIGHT TO STIR THE BLOOD...
...THIS BRIGHT, FINE MONDAY MORNING--
--AS PHOENIX AND SHADOWCAT OF
EXCALIBUR
...STREAK UP THE THAMES RIVER, ACROSS THE HEART OF LONDON, ON THEIR WAY HOME.
STAN LEE presents
THE PRICE
AMONG THE WATCHERS--
--STIRRED TO THE SOUL OF HIS EXTREMELY SHALLOW BEING--
--MERCHANT BANKER NIGEL FROBISHER.
IF THE WORD HAD ANY MEANING FOR HIM...
...ONE MIGHT ALMOST SAY, HE'S IN LOVE.
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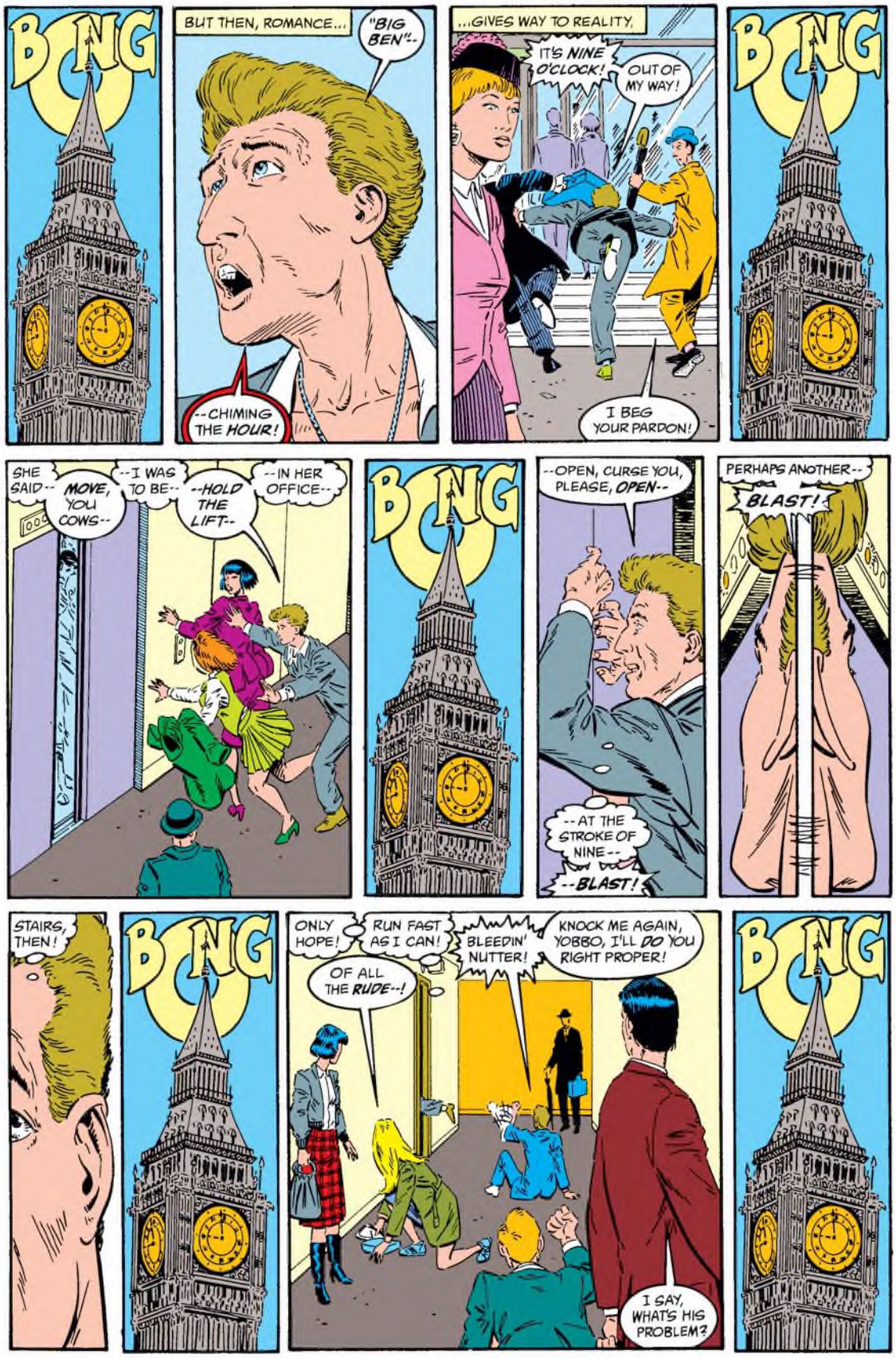
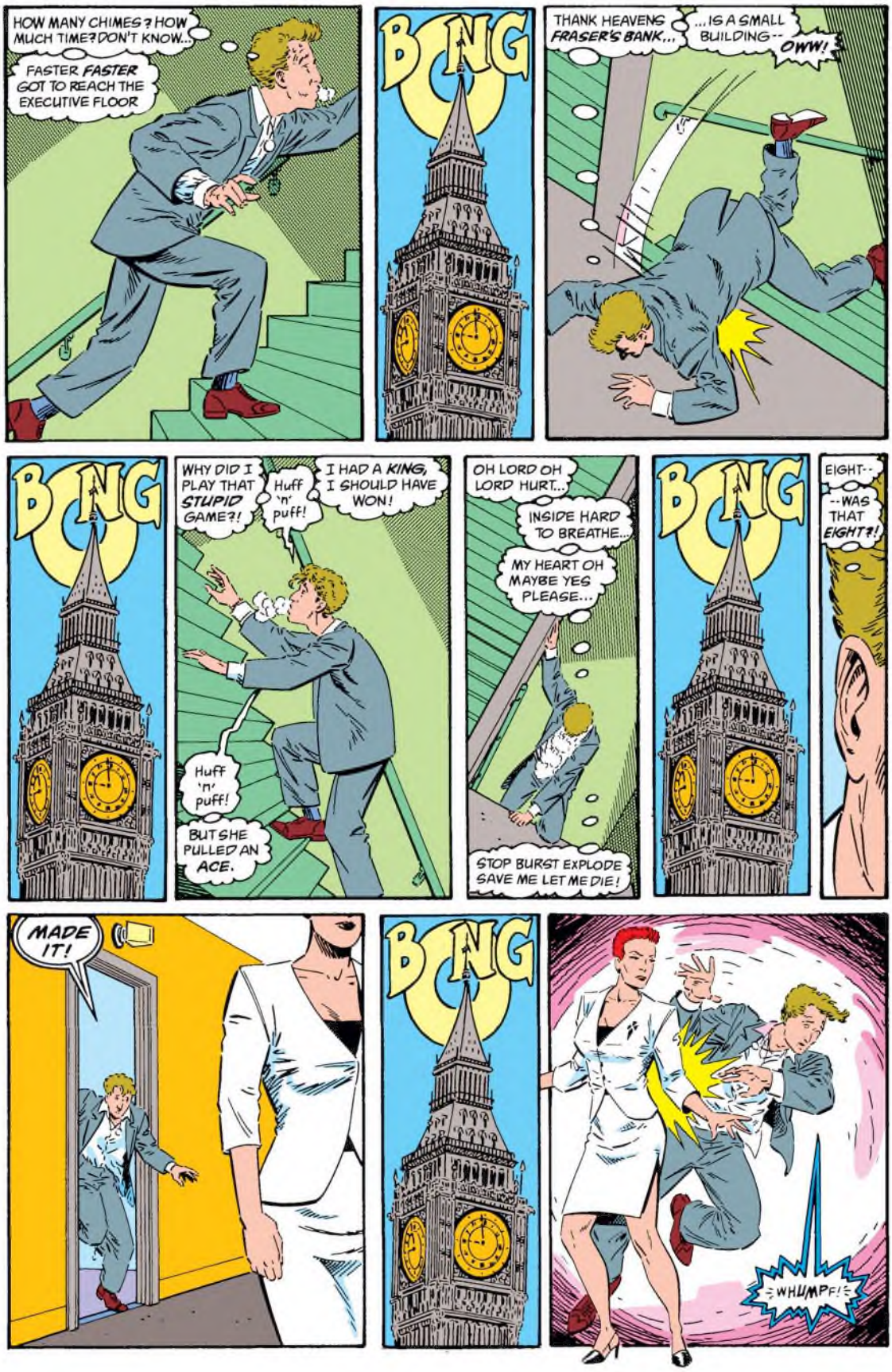
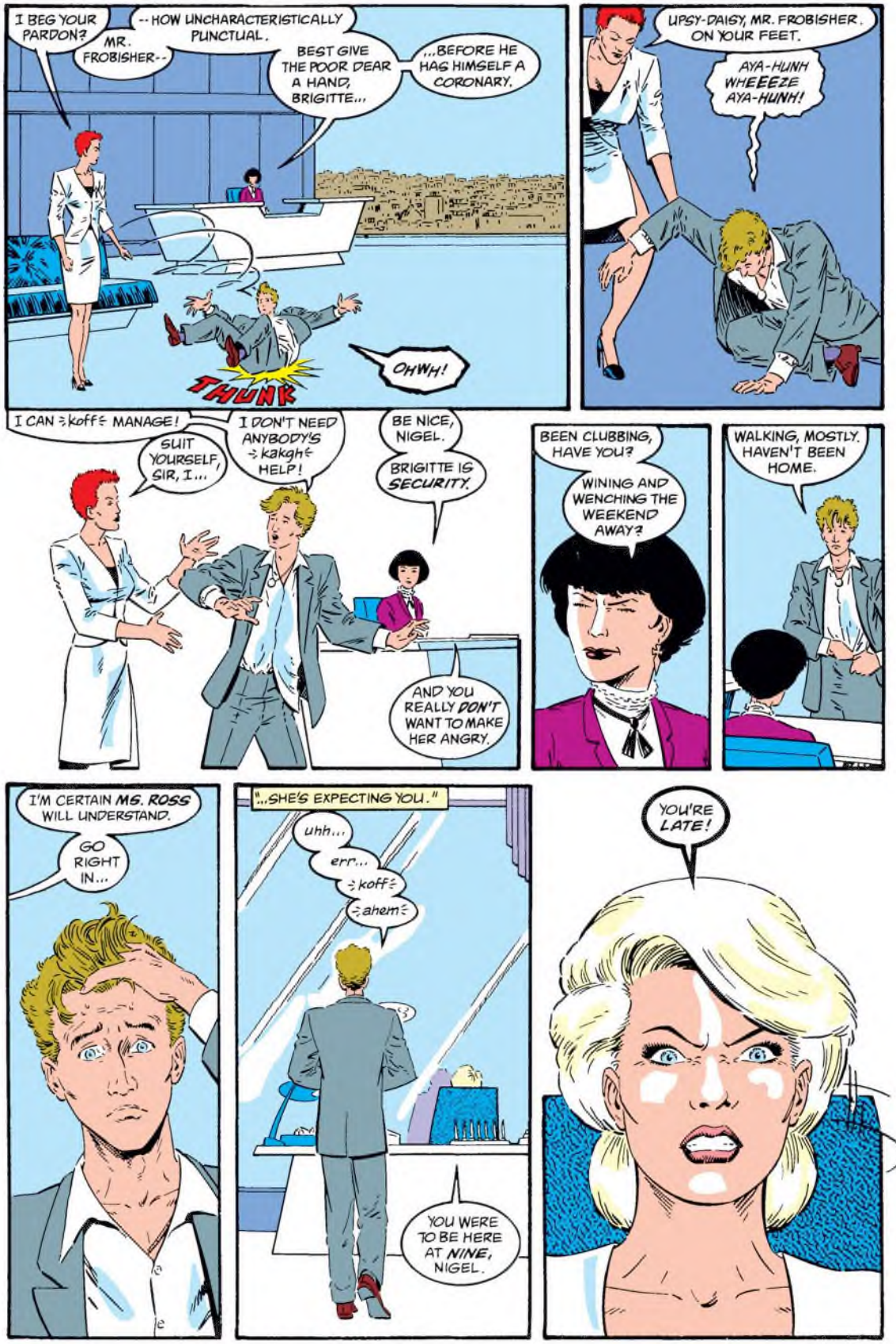
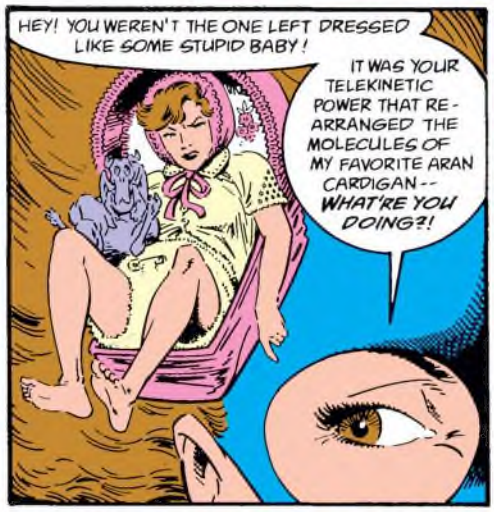

BING
BUT THEN, ROMANCE...
"BIG BEN"--
--CHIMING THE HOUR!
...GIVES WAY TO REALITY.
IT'S NINE O'CLOCK!
OUT OF MY WAY!
I BEG YOUR PARDON!
BING
SHE SAID--
MOVE, YOU COWS--
--I WAS TO BE--
--HOLD THE LIFT--
--IN HER OFFICE--
BING
--OPEN, CURSE YOU, PLEASE, OPEN--
--AT THE STROKE OF NINE--
--BLAST!
PERHAPS ANOTHER--
BLAST!
STAIRS, THEN!
BING
ONLY HOPE!
RUN FAST AS I CAN!
BLEEDIN' NUTTER!
KNOCK ME AGAIN, YOBBO, I'LL DO YOU RIGHT PROPER!
OF ALL THE RUDE--!
I SAY, WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM?
BING

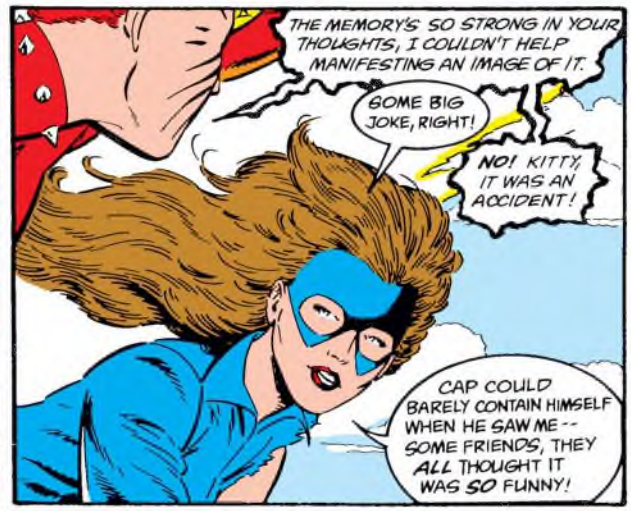

HOW MANY CHIMES? HOW MUCH TIME? DON'T KNOW...
FASTER FASTER GOT TO REACH THE EXECUTIVE FLOOR
BONG
THANK HEAVENS FRASER'S BANK...
...IS A SMALL BUILDING--
OWW!
BONG
WHY DID I PLAY THAT STUPID GAME?!
Huff 'n' puff!
I HAD A KING, I SHOULD HAVE WON!
Huff 'n' puff!
BUT SHE PULLED AN ACE.
OH LORD OH LORD HURT...
INSIDE HARD TO BREATHE...
MY HEART OH MAYBE YES PLEASE...
STOP BURST EXPLODE SAVE ME LET ME DIE!
BONG
EIGHT--
--WAS THAT EIGHT?!
MADE IT!
BONG
WHUMPF!

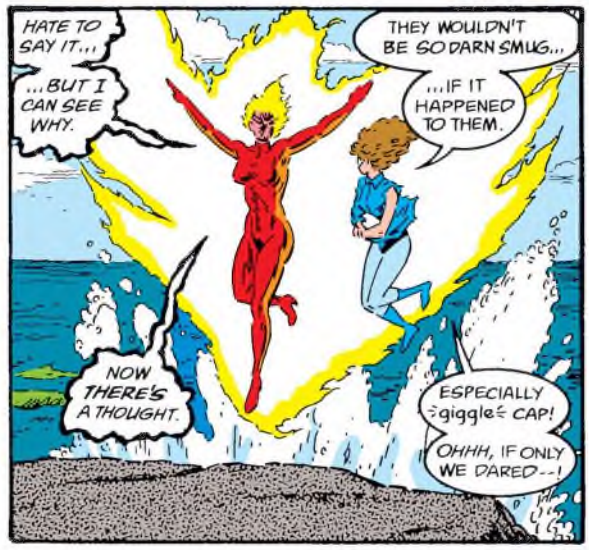

I BEG YOUR PARDON?
MR. FROBISHER--
-- HOW UNCHARACTERISTICALLY PUNCTUAL.
BEST GIVE THE POOR DEAR A HAND, BRIGITTE...
...BEFORE HE HAS HIMSELF A CORONARY.
THUNK
OHWH!
UPSY-DAISY, MR. FROBISHER. ON YOUR FEET.
AYA-HUNH WHEEEZE AYA-HUNH!
I CAN ÷koff÷ MANAGE!
SUIT YOURSELF, SIR, I...
I DON'T NEED ANYBODY'S ÷kakgh÷ HELP!
BE NICE, NIGEL.
BRIGITTE IS SECURITY.
AND YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO MAKE HER ANGRY.
BEEN CLUBBING, HAVE YOU?
WINING AND WENCHING THE WEEKEND AWAY?
WALKING, MOSTLY. HAVEN'T BEEN HOME.
I'M CERTAIN MS. ROSS WILL UNDERSTAND.
GO RIGHT IN...
"...SHE'S EXPECTING YOU."
uhh...
err...
÷koff÷
÷ahem÷
YOU WERE TO BE HERE AT NINE, NIGEL.
YOU'RE LATE!

AT ROUGHLY THAT VERY MOMENT...
...AFTER AN EXTREMELY QUICK FLIGHT TO BRITAIN'S WEST COAST...
I DID THAT?
I GUESS YOU HAD MORE IMPORTANT THINGS ON YOUR MIND...
...THAN USING THE DOOR.

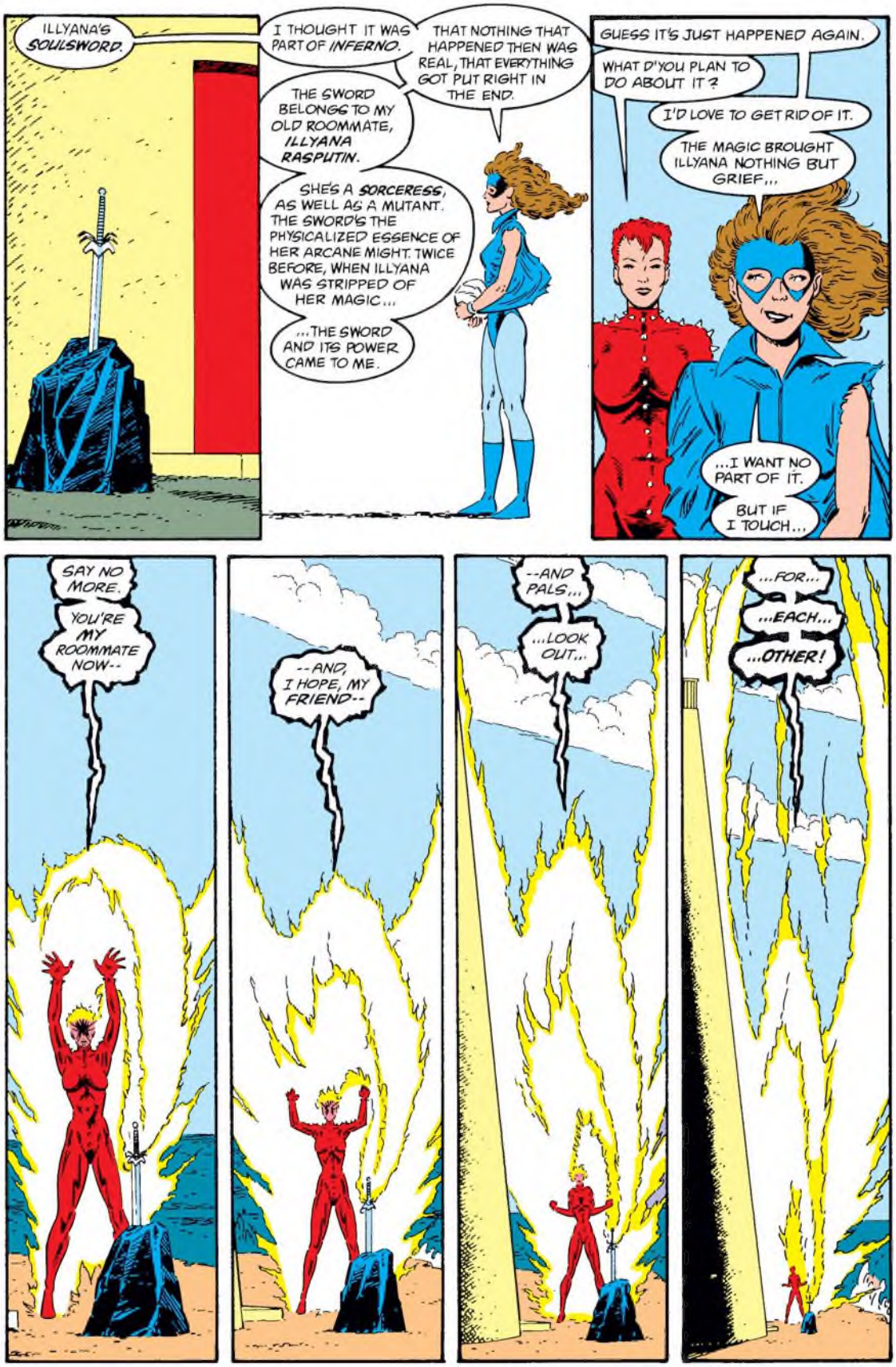
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
TEACH ME TO REACT WITHOUT THINKING.
SOMETHING SURE BETTER.
LETTING HER POWER OVERWHELM HER WAS WHAT GOT THE ORIGINAL PHOENIX INTO TROUBLE.
WHY'RE YOU BEING SO CRABBY, KIDDO? I SAID I WAS SORRY.

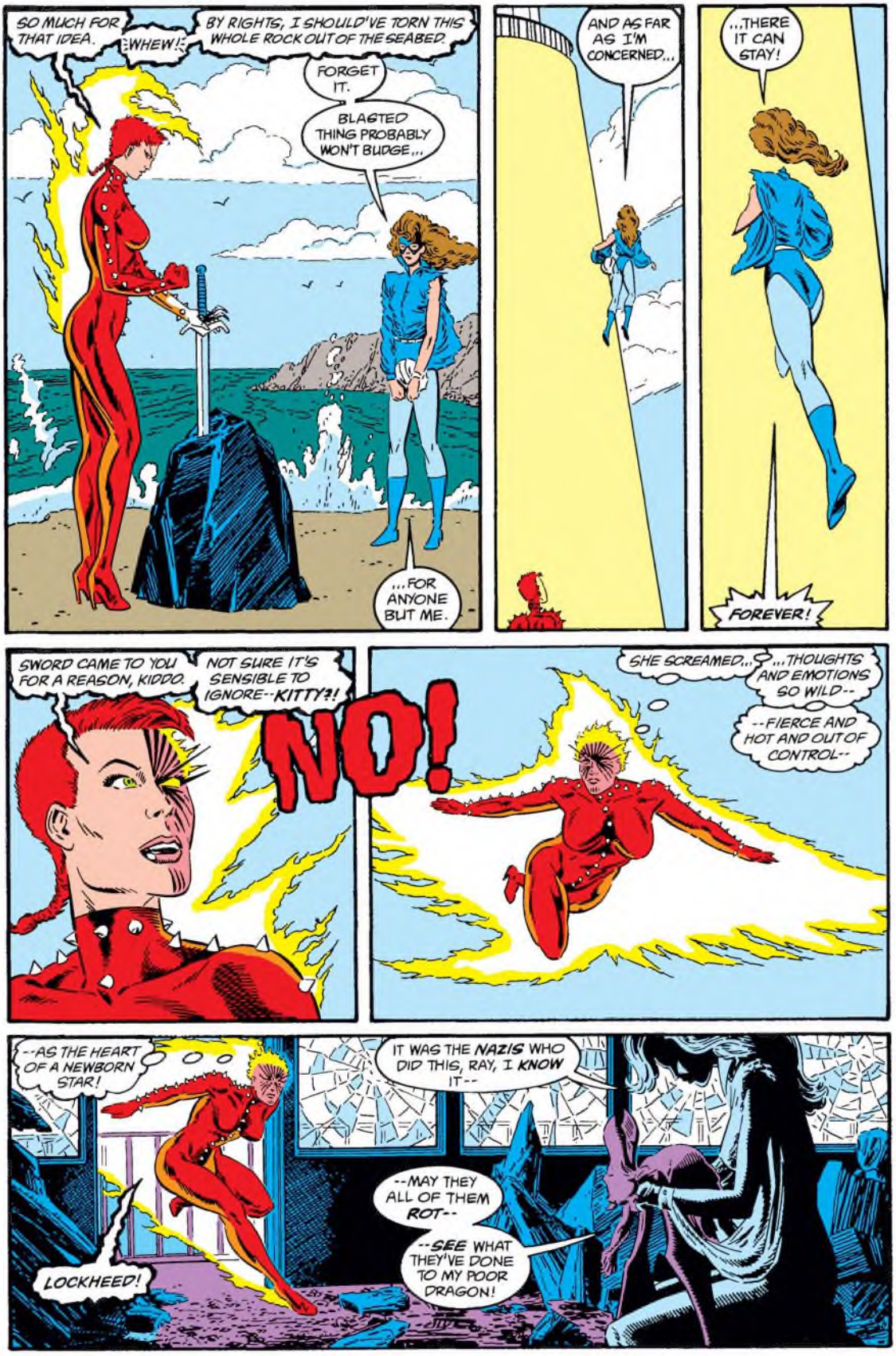

HEY! YOU WEREN'T THE ONE LEFT DRESSED LIKE SOME STUPID BABY!
IT WAS YOUR TELEKINETIC POWER THAT RE-ARRANGED THE MOLECULES OF MY FAVORITE ARAN CARDIGAN -- WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!

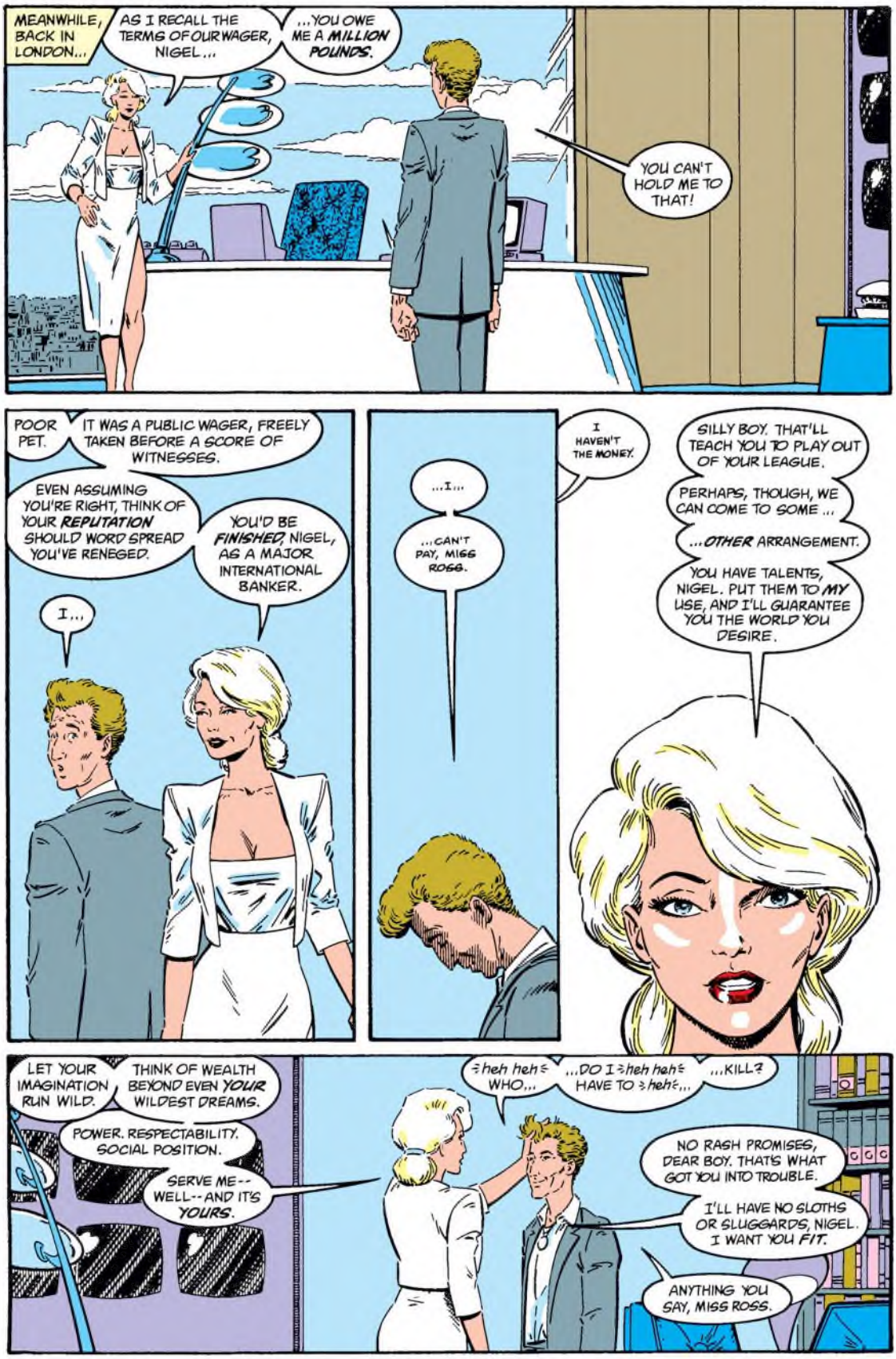

THE MEMORY'S SO STRONG IN YOUR THOUGHTS, I COULDN'T HELP MANIFESTING AN IMAGE OF IT.
SOME BIG JOKE, RIGHT!
NO! KITTY, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
CAP COULD BARELY CONTAIN HIMSELF WHEN HE SAW ME -- SOME FRIENDS, THEY ALL THOUGHT IT WAS SO FUNNY!

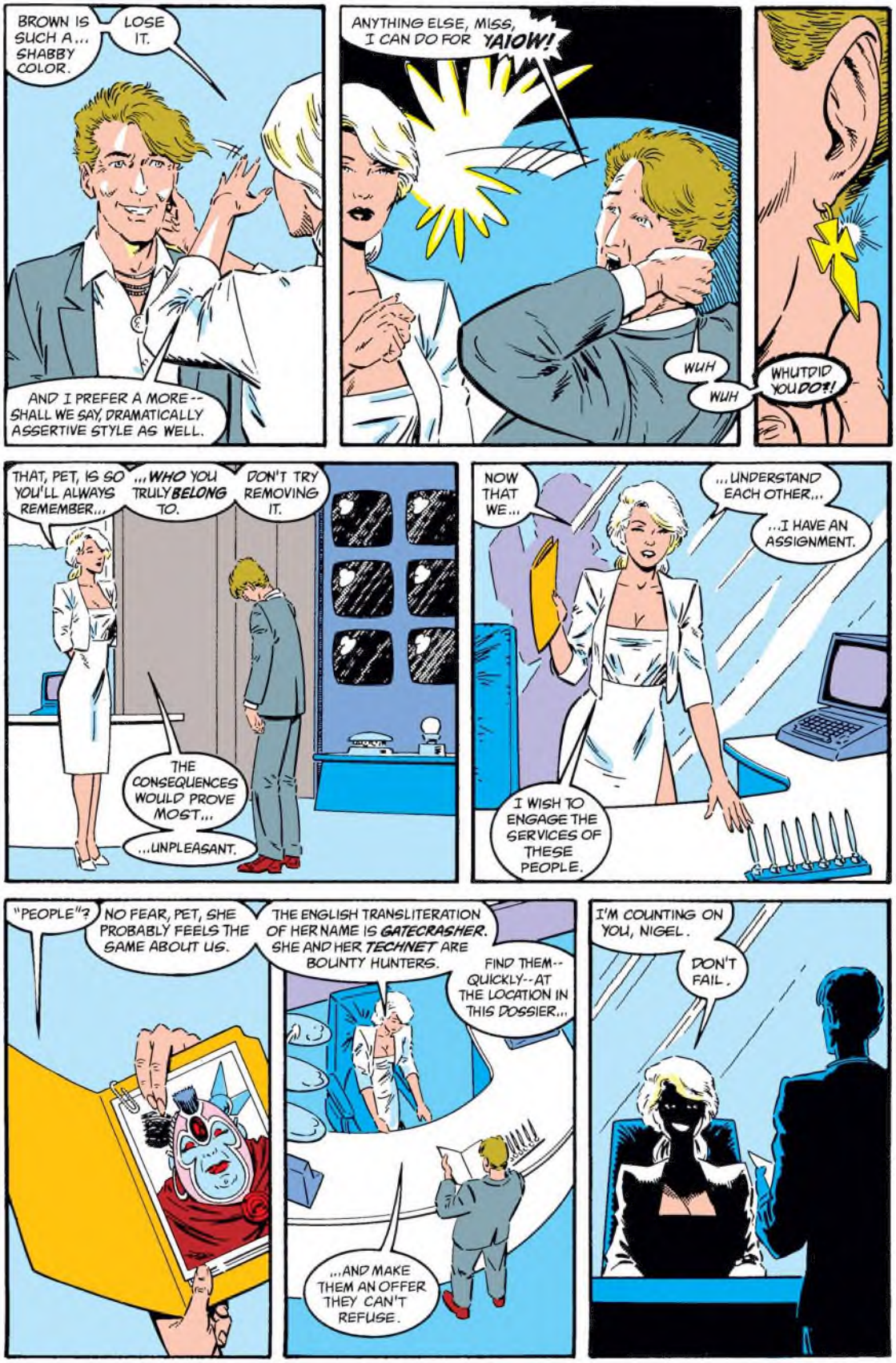

HATE TO SAY IT...
...BUT I CAN SEE WHY.
THEY WOULDN'T BE SO DARN SMUG...
...IF IT HAPPENED TO THEM.
NOW THERE'S A THOUGHT.
ESPECIALLY ÷giggle÷ CAP!
OHHH, IF ONLY WE DARED--!

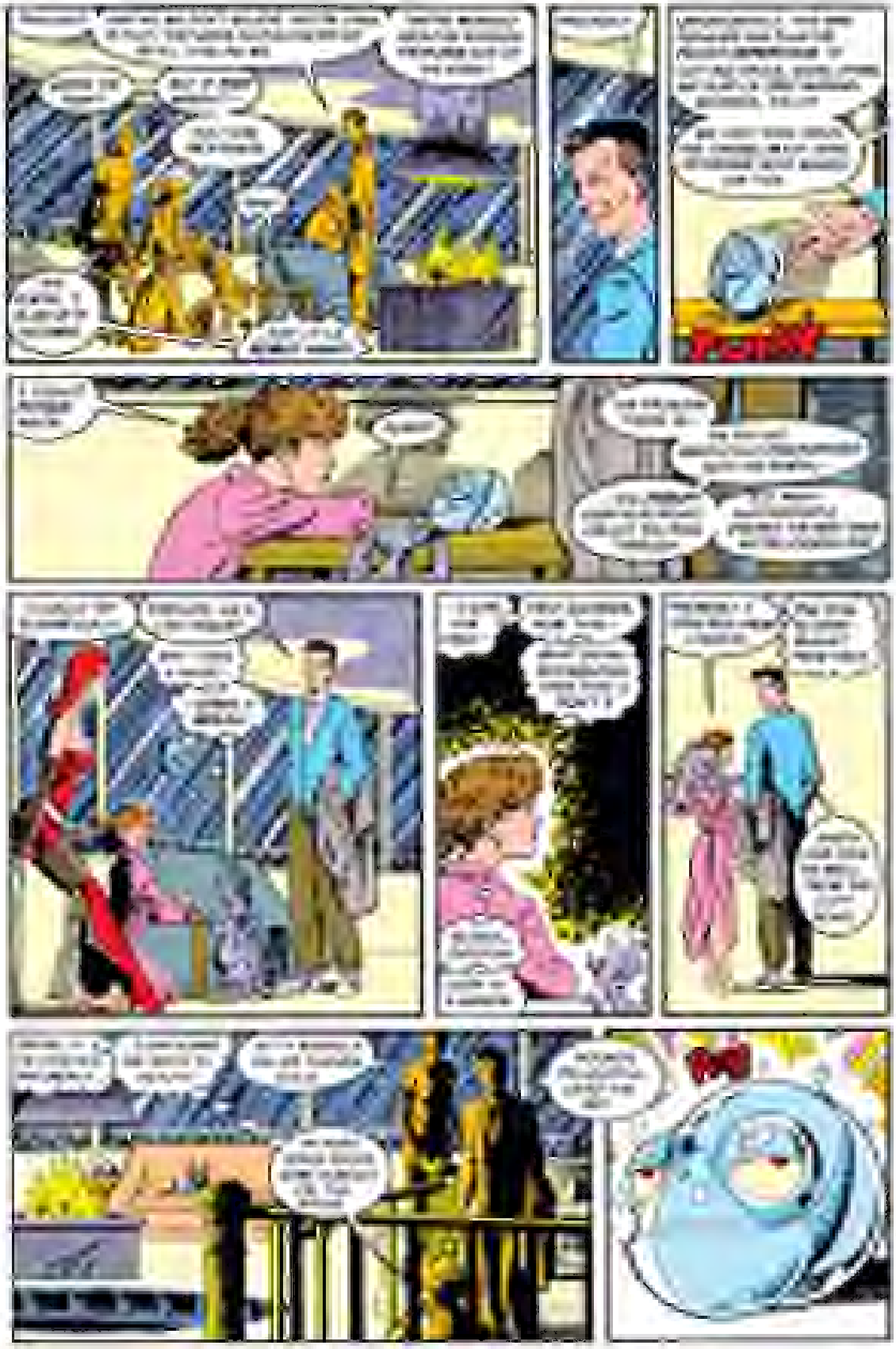
I'M GAME.
HONESTLY, THOUGH, I DIDN'T MEAN TO PICK YOUR BRAIN.
YOU'RE RIGHT, SOMETIMES MY CONTROL ISN'T WHAT IT SHOULD--
--KITTY, YOU'RE PALE AS ICE.
LOOK THERE.
BY THE FRONT DOOR.


ILLYANA'S SOULSWORD.
I THOUGHT IT WAS PART OF INFERNO.
THAT NOTHING THAT HAPPENED THEN WAS REAL, THAT EVERYTHING GOT PUT RIGHT IN THE END.
THE SWORD BELONGS TO MY OLD ROOMMATE, ILLYANA RASPUTIN.
SHE'S A SORCERESS, AS WELL AS A MUTANT. THE SWORD'S THE PHYSICALIZED ESSENCE OF HER ARCANE MIGHT. TWICE BEFORE, WHEN ILLYANA WAS STRIPPED OF HER MAGIC...
...THE SWORD AND ITS POWER CAME TO ME.
GUESS IT'S JUST HAPPENED AGAIN.
WHAT D'YOU PLAN TO DO ABOUT IT?
I'D LOVE TO GET RID OF IT.
THE MAGIC BROUGHT ILLYANA NOTHING BUT GRIEF...
...I WANT NO PART OF IT.
BUT IF I TOUCH...
SAY NO MORE.
YOU'RE MY ROOMMATE NOW--
--AND, I HOPE, MY FRIEND--
--AND PALS...
...LOOK OUT...
...FOR...
...EACH...
...OTHER!


SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA.
WHEW!
BY RIGHTS, I SHOULD'VE TORN THIS WHOLE ROCK OUT OF THE SEABED.
FORGET IT.
BLASTED THING PROBABLY WON'T BUDGE...
...FOR ANYONE BUT ME.
AND AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...
...THERE IT CAN STAY!
FOREVER!
SWORD CAME TO YOU FOR A REASON, KIDDO.
NOT SURE IT'S SENSIBLE TO IGNORE--KITTY?!
NO!
SHE SCREAMED...
...THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS SO WILD--
--FIERCE AND HOT AND OUT OF CONTROL--
--AS THE HEART OF A NEWBORN STAR!
IT WAS THE NAZIS WHO DID THIS, RAY, I KNOW IT--
--MAY THEY ALL OF THEM ROT--
--SEE WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO MY POOR DRAGON!
LOCKHEED!


MEANWHILE, BACK IN LONDON...
AS I RECALL THE TERMS OF OUR WAGER, NIGEL...
...YOU OWE ME A MILLION POUNDS.
YOU CAN'T HOLD ME TO THAT!
POOR PET.
IT WAS A PUBLIC WAGER, FREELY TAKEN BEFORE A SCORE OF WITNESSES.
EVEN ASSUMING YOU'RE RIGHT, THINK OF YOUR REPUTATION SHOULD WORD SPREAD YOU'VE RENEGED.
YOU'D BE FINISHED, NIGEL, AS A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL BANKER.
I...
...I...
...CAN'T PAY, MISS ROSS.
I HAVEN'T THE MONEY.
SILLY BOY. THAT'LL TEACH YOU TO PLAY OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE.
PERHAPS, THOUGH, WE CAN COME TO SOME ...
...OTHER ARRANGEMENT.
YOU HAVE TALENTS, NIGEL. PUT THEM TO MY USE, AND I'LL GUARANTEE YOU THE WORLD YOU DESIRE.
LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD.
THINK OF WEALTH BEYOND EVEN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS.
POWER. RESPECTABILITY. SOCIAL POSITION.
SERVE ME-- WELL--AND IT'S YOURS.
heh heh WHO...
...DO I heh heh HAVE TO heh...
...KILL?
NO RASH PROMISES, DEAR BOY. THAT'S WHAT GOT YOU INTO TROUBLE.
I'LL HAVE NO SLOTHS OR SLUGGARDS, NIGEL. I WANT YOU FIT.
ANYTHING YOU SAY, MISS ROSS.

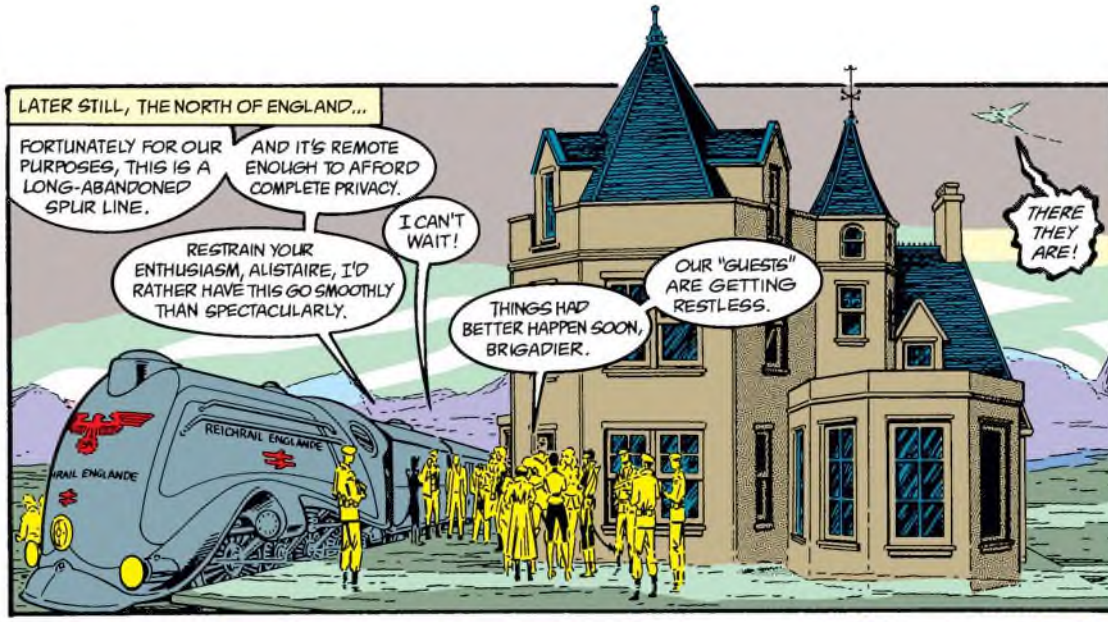

BROWN IS SUCH A... SHABBY COLOR.
LOSE IT.
AND I PREFER A MORE-- SHALL WE SAY, DRAMATICALLY ASSERTIVE STYLE AS WELL.
ANYTHING ELSE, MISS, I CAN DO FOR
YAIOW!
WUH
WUH
WHUT DID YOU DO?!
THAT, PET, IS SO YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER...
...WHO YOU TRULY BELONG TO.
DON'T TRY REMOVING IT.
THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD PROVE MOST...
...UNPLEASANT.
NOW THAT WE...
...UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER...
...I HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT.
I WISH TO ENGAGE THE SERVICES OF THESE PEOPLE.
"PEOPLE"?
NO FEAR, PET, SHE PROBABLY FEELS THE SAME ABOUT US.
THE ENGLISH TRANSLITERATION OF HER NAME IS GATECRASHER. SHE AND HER TECHNET ARE BOUNTY HUNTERS.
FIND THEM-- QUICKLY--AT THE LOCATION IN THIS DOSSIER...
...AND MAKE THEM AN OFFER THEY CAN'T REFUSE.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU, NIGEL.
DON'T FAIL.

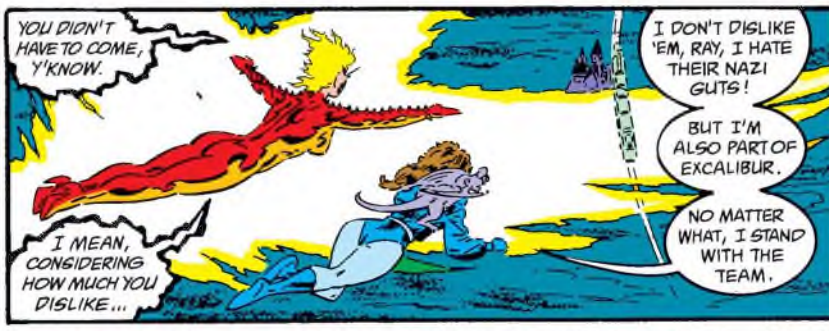


Blaster
AARRGH!

ARRR
UPCH!

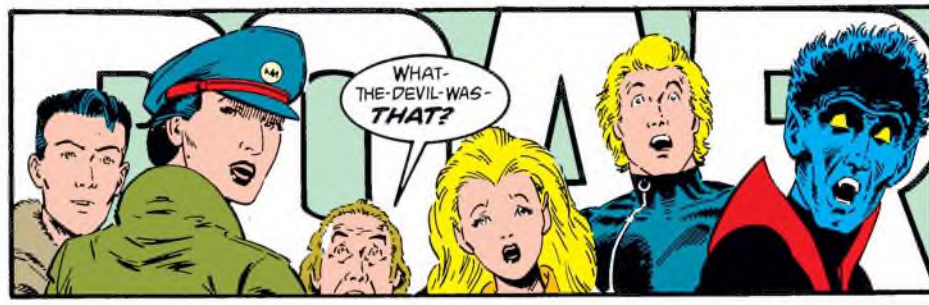
GLLISH

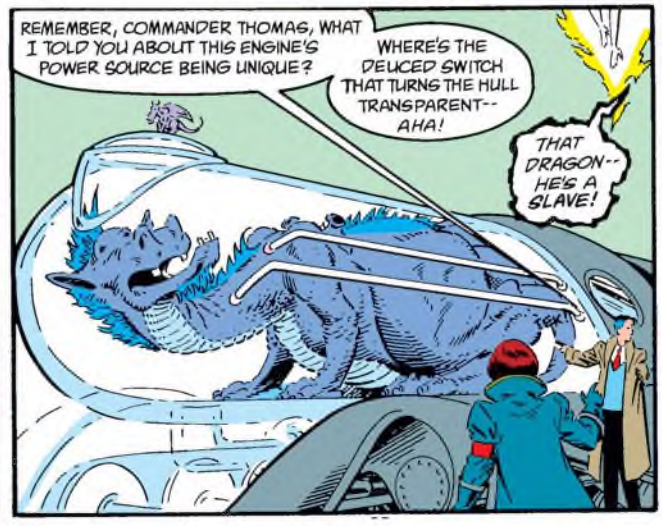

LATER STILL, THE NORTH OF ENGLAND...
FORTUNATELY FOR OUR PURPOSES, THIS IS A LONG-ABANDONED SPUR LINE.
AND IT'S REMOTE ENOUGH TO AFFORD COMPLETE PRIVACY.
RESTRAIN YOUR ENTHUSIASM, ALISTAIRE, I'D RATHER HAVE THIS GO SMOOTHLY THAN SPECTACULARLY.
I CAN'T WAIT!
THINGS HAD BETTER HAPPEN SOON, BRIGADIER.
OUR "GUESTS" ARE GETTING RESTLESS.
THERE THEY ARE!
REICHRAIL ENGLANDE
RAIL ENGLANDE


YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO COME, Y'KNOW.
I MEAN, CONSIDERING HOW MUCH YOU DISLIKE...
I DON'T DISLIKE 'EM, RAY, I HATE THEIR NAZI GUTS!
BUT I'M ALSO PART OF EXCALIBUR.
NO MATTER WHAT, I STAND WITH THE TEAM.

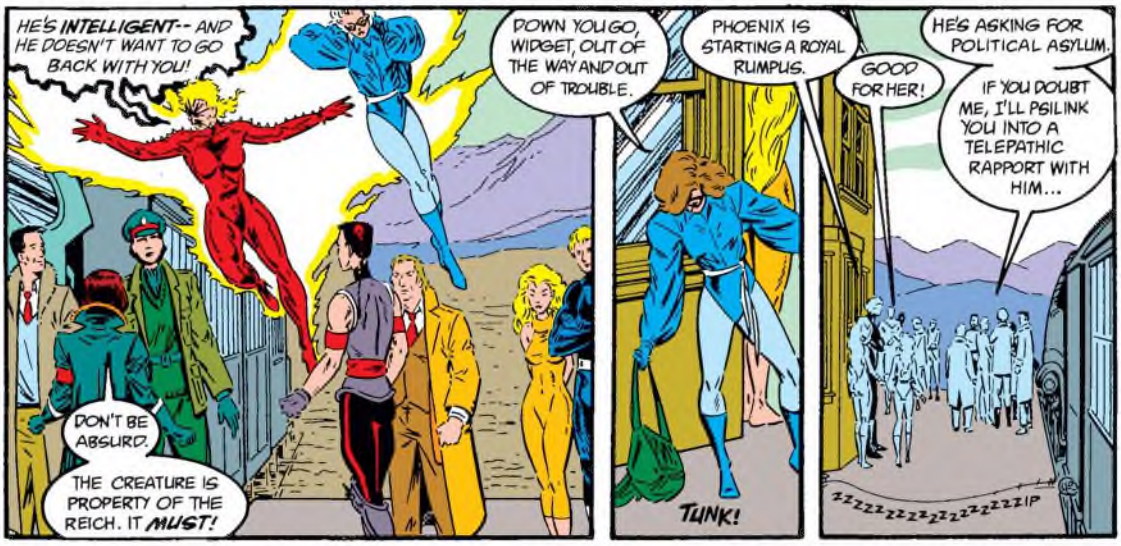
WAIOWH!

LOCKHEED, WHAT'RE YOU...
...DOING?!
ROAR


WHAT-THE-DEVIL-WAS-THAT?


REMEMBER, COMMANDER THOMAS, WHAT I TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS ENGINE'S POWER SOURCE BEING UNIQUE?
WHERE'S THE DELUCED SWITCH THAT TURNS THE HULL TRANSPARENT--AHA!
THAT DRAGON--HE'S A SLAVE!

WHAT OF IT?
A BEAST'S PORTION IS BUT TO SERVE.

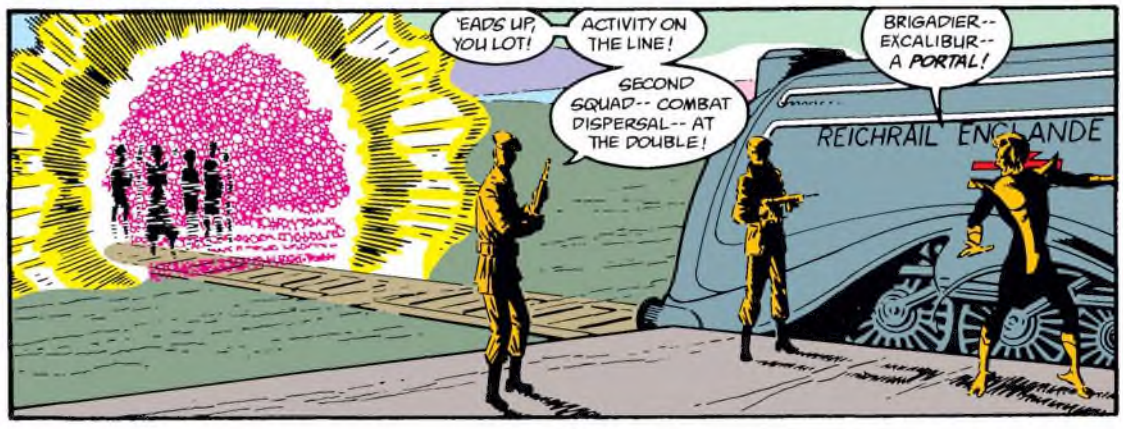

HE'S INTELLIGENT-- AND HE DOESN'T WANT TO GO BACK WITH YOU!
DON'T BE ABSURD.
THE CREATURE IS PROPERTY OF THE REICH. IT MUST!
DOWN YOU GO, WIDGET, OUT OF THE WAY AND OUT OF TROUBLE.
PHOENIX IS STARTING A ROYAL RUMPUS.
TUNK!
GOOD FOR HER!
HE'S ASKING FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM.
IF YOU DOUBT ME, I'LL PSILINK YOU INTO A TELEPATHIC RAPPORT WITH HIM...
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZIP

WHY'D THEY CHOOSE THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE FOR THE EXCHANGE? WHERE ARE WE, ANYWAY?
FENBOROUGH.
STATION WAS BUILT A CENTURY AGO BY A RICH INDUSTRIALIST.
ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THIS WAS THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT FORTRESS, A PLACE OF DARKEST SORCERY. NOTHING HERE EVER PROSPERED, AND THE INDUSTRIALIST DIED MAD AND A PAUPER.
I WAS BORN NEAR HERE. THAT'S WHY MY PEOPLE -- THE TRAVELING FOLK-- THOUGHT ME A DEMON.
Y'KNOW, NIGHTCRAWLER WAS RAISED BY GYPSIES, TOO.

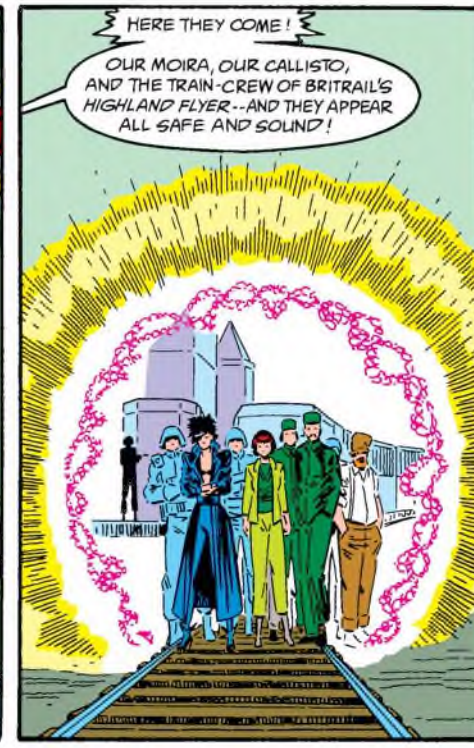
REALLY? MINE BELIEVED I'D BEEN CURSED BY THE EVIL OF THIS HAUNTED PLACE.
DUNNO ABOUT "EVIL"...
...BUT IT SURE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

...THE LARGER THE MASS TO BE TRANSPORTED, THE RISKIER THE SPELL, YES?
SOLUTION SEEMS OBVIOUS. LEAVE THE TRAIN.
WHICH IS WHY THE DRAGON IS SO DESPERATE TO STAY!
IT IS MY TRAIN.
REICHMINISTER...

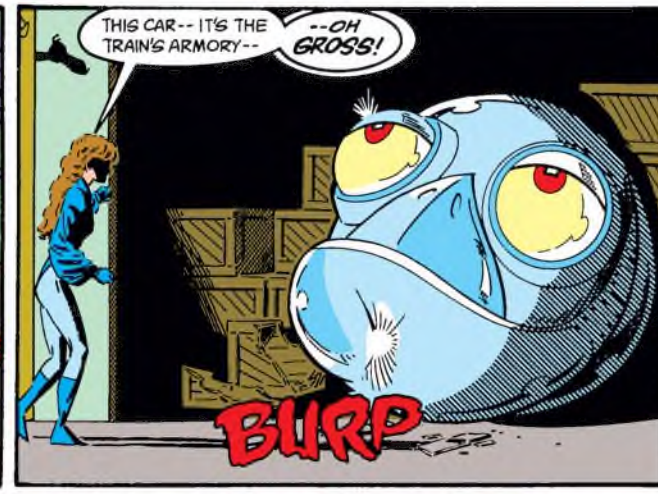
...YOUR SECURITY IS MY PARAMOUNT RESPONSIBILITY.
FORGIVE ME. PROF TALKS SENSE.
POINT TAKEN, CALLISTO.
THE TRAIN STAYS.


'EADS UP, YOU LOT!
ACTIVITY ON THE LINE!
SECOND SQUAD-- COMBAT DISPERSAL-- AT THE DOUBLE!
BRIGADIER-- EXCALIBUR-- A PORTAL!
REICHRAIL ENGLANDE

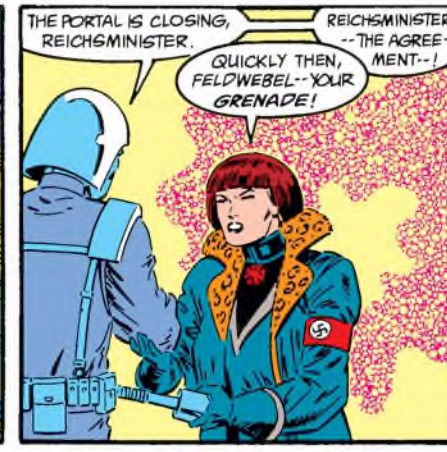
AT THE READY, EXCALIBUR!
IF THERE'S TREACHERY, WE'LL DEAL WITH IT.
D'YOU THINK THEY'LL TRY ANYTHING, BRIAN?
BEST TO BE PREPARED.
FEEL SO-- TWITCHY.
I'M SURE SOMETHING'S WRONG--BUT WHAT?!
IS IT THIS PLACE, THE SITUATION--OR JUST MY NERVES?

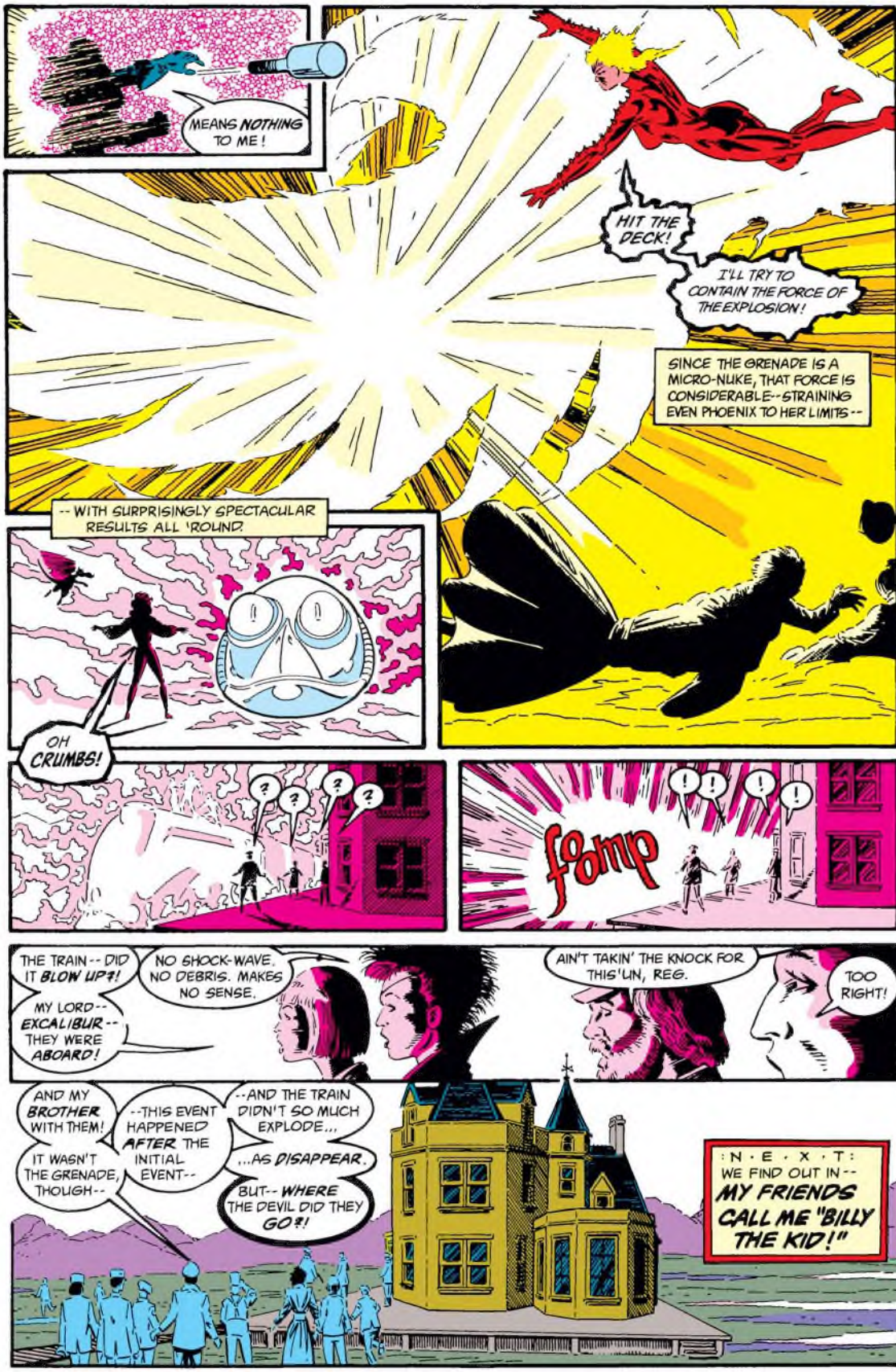

HERE THEY COME!
OUR MOIRA, OUR CALLISTO, AND THE TRAIN-CREW OF BRITRAIL'S HIGHLAND FLYER--AND THEY APPEAR ALL SAFE AND SOUND!

SO FAR, SO GOOD, LOCKHEED, LET'S KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED.
YAH!
MY RUCKSACK-- EMPTY--
--WHERE'D THAT PESKY WIDGET--
munch munch munch
--UH-OH!


THIS CAR-- IT'S THE TRAIN'S ARMORY--
--OH GROSS!
BURP

HEARD SOMETHING!
A BURP, MAJOR, WHAT OF IT?
YOU'VE NO IDEA, BRIGADIER, HOW LOVELY IT IS TO HEAR THOSE WORDS.
WELCOME HOME, DOCTOR M^cTAGGERT.
NEVER GO BACK.
LEVEL THAT HADES-PIT TO DUST!
O!! WE GET PAID FOR TIME WE BIN GONE?


THE PORTAL IS CLOSING, REICHSMINISTER.
REICHSMINISTER --THE AGREEMENT--!
QUICKLY THEN, FELDWEBEL--YOUR GRENADE!


MEANS NOTHING TO ME!
HIT THE DECK!
I'LL TRY TO CONTAIN THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION!
SINCE THE GRENADE IS A MICRO-NUKE, THAT FORCE IS CONSIDERABLE--STRAINING EVEN PHOENIX TO HER LIMITS--
-- WITH SURPRISINGLY SPECTACULAR RESULTS ALL 'ROUND.
OH CRUMBS!
foomp
THE TRAIN -- DID IT BLOW UP?!
MY LORD-- EXCALIBUR-- THEY WERE ABOARD!
NO SHOCK-WAVE. NO DEBRIS. MAKES NO SENSE.
AIN'T TAKIN' THE KNOCK FOR THIS'LIN, REG.
TOO RIGHT!
AND MY BROTHER WITH THEM!
IT WASN'T THE GRENADE, THOUGH--
--THIS EVENT HAPPENED AFTER THE INITIAL EVENT--
--AND THE TRAIN DIDN'T SO MUCH EXPLODE...
...AS DISAPPEAR.
BUT-- WHERE THE DEVIL DID THEY GO?!
:N·E·X·T: WE FIND OUT IN-- MY FRIENDS CALL ME "BILLY THE KID!"